SHRI S.R. BOMMAI : I am not saying whether there are three or 10 Members to speak on the Bill. Everybody has a right to speak. I do not want to curtail the number of Members who want to speak on this Bill. My only request is that continuity should be there. At least, on the next day the matter should be finished.

SHRI RAM NAIK : Sir, many Members are eager to support the Bill.

SHRI S.R. BOMMAI : I welcome it.

17.09 hrs.

DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193

Rise in Prices of Essential Commodities

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, let us take Item Number 19. Shri Pinaki Mishra may continue his speech on rise in prices of essential commodities.

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA (Puri) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I said yesterday that there was a dismal scenario which confronts us in this country in 1996. I am sure that a vast body of public opinion today shares my viewpoint.

We are all reminded of 1990 and 1991. That, Mr. Chairman, brings us back to the old dictum during the the French Revolution : "The more things change, the more they remain the same." I also said yesterday that there was a general sense of well being in this country for five years between 1991 and 1996 when the Congress Party was in power at the Centre and I said so advisedly. The reason being: What is the barometer of a sense of well being which permeates among the people? These are well known barometers all over the world. The stock market booms are there, there is investor confidence, there is a lot of money being pumped into the stock market, investors are making money, business is booming, consumerism is thriving and foreign investment flows into the country unabated.

AN HON. MEMBER : There are scams.

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA : Some scams do take place. You cannot make omelets without breaking some eggs. But those scams, as I said yesterday, are more in the nature of allegations and in a democracy, everybody has the right to allege without going to jail. That is one of the fruits of democracy which we have inherited.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, in 1995, we had a scenario where we had 21 billion dollars in terms of foreign reserve.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Pinaki Mishra, if you can resume your seat for a minute, this laying of the paper can be finished.

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA : Yes, Sir.

17.13 hrs.

PAPER LAID ON THE TABLE

[English]

Treaty between the Government of the Republic of India and Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on sharing of Ganga/Ganga water at Farakka.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA): Sir, on behalf of Shri I.K. Gujral, I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of Hindi and English versions of the Treaty between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on sharing of the Ganga water at Farakka.

[Placed in the Library, See No. LT-891/96]

17.14 hrs.

RISE IN PRICES OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES-CONTD.

[English]

SHRI PINAKI MISHRA : Mr. Chairman, Sir, for this general sense of well being, Shakespeare once said: "God is in Heaven and all is right with the world" So, that is what happened with India. God was in heaven and for five years we had wonderful monsoons, we also had good winter rains and we had bumper crops. All this, unfortunately, makes us forget a very important, a very significant fact which has been pointed out time and again by agronomists all over the world, by agricultural experts, by senior authorities of the FAO which is the apex body of the World Food that India, primarily, is simply one bad monsoon away from a famine. Since we have had a succession of good monsoons, we have been flushed with foodgrains and our buffer stocks have risen. But we are basically one bad monsoon away from a famine and unfortunately, I am representing the State of Orissa which, we all know, - we have discussed this issue before in the House - is affected by drought this year.

While in 33 out of 35 agro-climatic divisions in the country there was average and above average rainfall, in just two agro-climatic regions there was no rainfall virtually and Orissa happens to fall in one of those regions. There is a drought situation there which borders on famine and one shudlers to think as to what would have happened to the rest of the country if we had one bad monsoon as we had in Orissa this year.

Sir, essentially, the problem of increase in the prices of essential commodities is really a microcosm of a larger ailment, which we face today in this country and